

falling from these habits

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falling from these habits

by [GenOfEve](#)

Summary

Dream said he wanted to get clean a while ago. But shit happens, life's not fair, and honestly, he was scared shitless.

And even with his best friend and his boyfriend to help him through this, he's scared shitless now.

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

Life never really goes to plan.

Shit fucks up, and things go wrong, and sometimes it's your fault, and sometimes it's not.

This, however, is *entirely* Dream's fault.

Weeks have passed since his nervous confession, since his quiet admittance that he was considering getting clean, and weeks have turned to months, and Dream can see the unsteady hope that had once lingered in his best friend's eyes gradually dissolving back into uncertainty, disappointment masked with concern.

Sapnap had been *overjoyed* when Dream said he wanted to get clean.

And *Dream* had followed it up with an *immediate* backtrack, saying that he wasn't ready *now*, that he needed 'a moment to think'.

A moment to do more fucking drugs, his head snarls at him, somehow audible over the sounds of thudding baselines from nearby speakers, and the drunken shouts of excited strangers as they stumble in and out of consciousness.

This isn't really a party he should be at.

But—

"Here. Try this, before you head out."

From across the couch, another man carefully holds a knife in trembling hands, the byproduct of too much serotonin, the blade aimed toward Dream, the tip of the switchblade balancing a precarious section of powder.

Although there is a weapon pointed toward him, there is no malice behind it.

Dream doesn't think. He simply acts on autopilot.

He leans down, closes off a nostril with a thumb, and racks the bump with the other, inhaling sharply before leaning back with a sigh.

It's good.

After a few minutes, he gives the knife-guy a nod of thanks, feeling the beginnings of a buzz crawl through his head, clouding his mind, before he stands up, and pushes through the crowd.

He needs to find George and go. He got what he came for, the little bag of coke buried in his jacket pocket, and his nose burning with the sensation of *something different*, the unusual buzz supplied to him by the freebie given by the young man holding a knife.

As he progresses through the house, dodging suspicious stains, the too-skinny girls with pupils blown, and dudes who have lost the concept of personal space, it becomes increasingly more obvious that whatever was on that knife *definitely* wasn't coke.

Man.

This is why he always usually tests his shit.

But, hey, a freebie's a freebie, and Dream blinks the nervous thoughts away as stimulation gives way to something heavier.

Has it always been this hard to walk? Has gravity always been this strong?

He blinks.

He breathes.

He presses on.

As he passes by a couple, the two speaking in hushed whispers beneath a door frame, their faces blur together, curling into one mass, like an oil painting Dream had seen in a museum once, long before leaving the house became a chore.

He blinks.

He breathes.

He presses on.

When he looks down, he doesn't recognise the feet attached to his own body. He feels as though he could reach out, and hold his own hand, as though he is not centred, and instead stood next to himself, inches to the left.

Dissociating.

Definitely not coke, he muses with a chuckle.

George sits idle under the dim fluorescents of a tiny kitchen, sipping punch from a red cup that somebody has forced into his hand.

Under the humming bulbs, bathed in a cool white tone, with the drugs making the light fracture and shift, George appears ethereal.

Dream reaches him, mildly sedated and far too calm for the busy, grimy situation that he's in. A lazy grin splits his mouth as George meets his eyes.

George offers one back, as he discards the red cup, and hops down from the kitchen counter he had been sitting on.

"We're going?"

"We're going," Dream nods, ignoring the way his voice slurs at the edges, fuzzy and warm, "I got what I came for."

George's palm is cool as it presses into Dream's own hand. He leads them out of the fluorescent lighting, outside, out the front door, out into the light of the moon, darker, but still present.

He remains ethereal.

"What did you take?"

There's no accusation in George's tone. It is soft, gentle, and lined with curiosity, the lightest touch

of concern.

His breath smells like pineapple juice and vodka.

His curiosity nags at Dream, concerns him as always.

He answers anyway, as George runs a thumb over the scabs on his knuckles, some from fighting, some from being far too drunk, and forcing his stomach contents to empty.

“I’m not sure,” he holds his hand steady as they walk, letting George trace patterns over old scars, “Feels like K, though. That, uh, lanky guy with the shitty tattoos gave me a bump. Nice kid. Probably too young to be here, honestly.”

“K?”

“Ketamine,” Dream exhales the word, softly, nervous to speak of his habits aloud in the open world, “It’s like, uh, a pain killer. Makes you stimulated for a little bit, but it’s mostly a downer, so then you get kinda sedated and floaty. Lotta dissociation. It’s nice though. Pretty intense if you have a lot of it, but that kinda goes for everything.”

George snorts, face pinched in thought.

“Isn’t that a *horse tranquilliser*?”

Dream laughs, and squeezes his hand.

“Sometimes. They use it in hospitals too though. Had some for pain relief when I fucked up my back after a game once.”

“Huh. The more you know.”

Dream hums, and they walk in a comfortable silence for a moment, both stumbling slightly, intoxicated by cheap alcohol. They hold each other up.

George always holds Dream up.

“Can I ask you something?”

“You can ask me anything.”

“Why haven’t you quit yet?”

Ah. The million dollar question.

“Okay, maybe not *that*,” Dream jokes, but it falls flat, comes out hard, and he apologises immediately, silently, squeezing George’s hand and offering a swipe of his thumb to his knuckles.

Dream sighs. Tries again.

“Sapnap told you, right?”

“I’m sorry—“

“No, *no*, don’t be. I guess...” he trails off, thinks a moment, eyebrows creased in frustration, but not at George, no, “I guess I just know it’s going to be pain in the fucking ass. And, I’m trying so hard to keep up with college, and my focus is just *not* where I need it to be. It’d just be one more thing to *deal* with, you know?”

He glances to the side, where George holds him steady, despite his own sway to his steps, glances at long lashes, and teeth worrying at soft lips.

“And,” Dream tacks on, nervously, “I wouldn’t wanna put that kind of strain on you.”

That earns him a frown.

“*Me?*”

“We’ve only been together for, like, a couple months, and—“

“So, we *are* together?”

Dream flushes. He guesses that somewhere in amongst his clouded brain, he forgot to actually clarify what George was to him.

His embarrassment quickly gives way to fear, and he fumbles on one of his steps, George’s hand steadying him.

“I— well—“

“Dream,” George laughs suddenly, breaking the tension, “I’ve counted us as together since I let you bleed all over me in your shitty bedroom. I’m glad it’s not just me in this. You can breathe.”

Dream blinks.

Dream breathes.

He doesn't stumble on the next step.

"Oh— well, good."

Ketamine really kills any wordsmith abilities that somebody has.

He carries on.

"Look, uh, quitting coke, it's impossible for a lot of people," Dream shrugs, "It'd be a lot for you to see."

"Impossible, huh?" George muses, "Should be easy for you then."

Dream laughs, George's compliments spilling liquid heat over his skin, still stained by his own uncertainty, but filled with love nonetheless.

"Probably be easier if I didn't have an eight-ball in my pocket right now."

"So toss it."

Dream blanches, and George laughs.

"I'm *kidding*," he says through tipsy giggles, "God, your *face*, Dream."

"It's— it's just *expensive*," Dream grumbles, and George laughs harder.

It echoes through the street, and reverberates back to them, bouncing back from every angle, and Dream has never loved a sound more.

"We'll figure it out," George says with a shrug, back on topic like he never left, "You can give it one last go, and you, me, and Sapnap can figure it out. Together."

Together.

Dream runs his tongue over his teeth, before he clicks it a few times, thinking.

“I don’t want to push you. I still feel like— like, uh, I’m rushing you into some shitty situation. Like, we jumped into this shit together and hardly really know each other, and I—“

“What’s my favourite colour?”

Dream blinks slow, startled by the suddenness of George’s query, but too delayed to react adequately.

“Blue,” he smiles gently at a memory, “because it’s the only one you can really see.”

“What grade did I get on my last assignment?”

“Eighty-nine— which was *bullshit*, you *easily* deserved a low ninety.”

“What’s my pin code?”

Dream flushes.

“...my birthday.”

“I could ask you a thousand questions, Dream. Even high, you could answer them all. You *know* me. And I know *you*, and I know how I *feel*.”

Dream kisses him, lazy and languid, slow and sedated, and George laughs against his lips at his impulsiveness.

“We do this together,” George murmurs against him, “Got it?”

Together.

“Okay,” Dream sighs, “Together.”

Together.

Chapter Notes

brief content warning for mentions of suicidal thoughts but it's not gone into explicit detail or anything!!!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

A week later, Dream picks absentmindedly at the carpet of their living room, pupils blown wide and a thin cooling sweat present upon his forehead.

He tugs on the loose strands, his mind humming a constant buzz of feedback as his hands tremble and he *blinks-blinks-blinks* rapidly.

A strand comes loose, and he pulls it harder, watching as it spirals away from the grain it had been woven into, curling into its own wooly individual, like hair pulled from a too tight braid.

He cocks his head, fixated.

“Dream.”

He blinks again, and once more, looking up suddenly, Sappnap's raised brows greeting him when he redirects his lost attention.

“Sorry—“ he clears his throat, still clutching at the strand of carpet, “What was the question?”

Sappnap takes a long sip from the beer bottle in his hand, and alternates between two tabs he has open on his laptop. George answers for him as he drinks, his own beer in hand.

It's a little early in the day to be drinking, but Dream supposes he isn't one to judge, not with his nose lined with powdered minuscule crystals.

“He asked if you wanted to do this cold turkey, or taper off.”

“Oh,” Dream chuckles, shaking the leftover contents of the small bag that rests on a plate upon the coffee table, “Well, I was thinking I'd just finish this tonight, and uh— it's only got like, one or two lines left, and then— like— that's that, you know? *So*,” he stretches out the vowel, drumming his hands on his outstretched legs, “cold turkey.”

“Cold turkey it is,” Sapnap chuckles at Dream’s fidgeting and quick speech as he taps at his keyboard, closing one tab and opening another as he opens a link, “wanna go over the symptoms?”

“Might as well, I’ll experience them soon enough.”

“Alright, first up we have an increase in appetite,” Sapnap chuckles, “Thank *god*, because I will not always be around to remind you to eat.”

“Shut up, Sap.”

“Fatigue—“ George adds from over Sapnap’s shoulder, and Sapnap laughs again.

“Oh, good, because I won’t always be around to remind you to *sleep*, either.”

“*Sapnap*—“ Dream groans, and George continues over the top of their bickering.

“Anxiety, depression, agitation—“

“Literally *nothing* new there—“

“Sapnap, I swear to fucking *god*—“

“Oh, restless behaviour,” George shrugs, “you have ADHD anyway, so—“

“*George*,” Dream whines, “*George*, don’t *betray* me.”

“Suicidal thoughts.”

Over the chaos, Sapnap’s voice is quiet, deadpan, and the teasing mood in the room dissipates quickly.

“You haven’t— you know— you haven’t had those before, have you?”

Sapnap is gentle, and speaks matter of factly, minimal sugar coating, and Dream appreciates it.

“Once,” he admits, “but it— it was when I was younger. Not like— not recently.”

“Hopefully it stays that way.”

“Yeah... *yeah*,” Dream sighs, “So how long will this take me anyway?”

“Oh, it *says*,” George hums as he leans over Sapnap to scroll down, “that it depends on how often, and how much is used.”

There's a collective wince.

"What's the baseline for heavy use?"

George hesitates, and Dream is wondering if he's having second thoughts, if he's realising just how intense this all is.

"Ten weeks."

"Ten?!"

"That's the baseline for a *regular* user," George bites at his bottom lip, and Dream wants to reach over, to tug it free before he breaks his skin, but he's frozen, "and even then, you might have some long term effects."

Dream inhales.

Dream holds his breath.

Dream exhales.

"I can do it. Ten weeks. *Okay*. That's— that's nothing."

"Dream, we could talk to a doctor, or—"

"*No*," Dream shakes his head, tugs at his hair with one hand and the loose carpet strand with the other, paranoia seeping into his bones, "No doctors. Doctor's mean *pills* and I don't— I don't think —"

"Dream," George is at his side, untangling his fingers from his hair, sliding them in between his hands, "It's okay. No doctors."

"You don't have to explain, man," Sapnap tacks on, taking another swig as he peers over his laptop, "in the end, it's your choice, Dream."

Faintly, Dream wonders what he ever did to deserve either of these two.

“Just... two things. What are you gonna do about your grades?”

“And football,” George tacks on, causing Dream to shake his head, embarrassed.

“I quit the team a couple weeks back.”

“What?” George whips his gaze back and forth, from Dream to Sapnap, seeking answers, “*Why?*”

“Because every time he got invited to one of their little shindigs after practice, he ended up scoring,” Sapnap fills in with a roll of his eyes, “He couldn’t afford it, and I was sick of him coming home loaded and asking me if he could borrow *my* fucking money.”

It’s not said with any malice, maybe some annoyance, but Dream flinches anyway.

“Well, I *stopped*, didn’t I?”

“You did,” Sapnap shrugs, “But George *asked*, didn’t he?”

He did.

Dream exhales forcefully, agitation pooling with his own embarrassment, and he makes a show of tapping out a line, pointedly ignoring Sapnap and George’s conversation as it carries on beside him, tuning them out as he tightens the roll on the dollar bill he’s been using.

His second-last line disappears upwards, into his nasal passages with a woosh and burn, a chemical wildfire itching in his right nostril.

He should probably switch, in case he gets a bleed. It’s overworked, and he can feel the uncomfortably familiar sensation of miniature crystalline formations caught within mucus along the inside of his nose.

He sniffs hard, clearing his sinuses, turning as somebody, George, tugs at his side to get his attention.

“Sorry, what?”

“What about your grades? Assignments and things.”

Grades.

He should be fine, right?

Dream sniffs again, rubs at his nose with a finger, licking it absentmindedly and curling his tongue at the toxic, bitter taste left behind, chasing the confidence that unfurls within his mind.

Waste not want not.

“Dream.”

“Oh,” *he’s forgotten to answer*, “Yeah. No. I’ll be fine. I’m like— like a *genius*, or whatever, remember?”

He laughs referencing an old conversation, and George snorts.

“Or *whatever*. Sure. But seriously, this isn’t going to be easy. You might feel good now, but you know it’s gonna fucking suck.”

“I’ll be *fine*— “

“Dream—“ Sapnap begins.

“*Look*,” he snaps with an awkward, forceful laugh, *overstimulated and over this conversation*, “I’ll be *fine*. We’ll cross that bridge if we have to, but for *fucks sake*, can we have a little faith in me *for once*?”

He slumps back, pushing on the carpet with his hands to hold himself upright, exhaling hard, pushing strands of hair with his breath.

“I *know* it’s going to be fucking hard, it’s just— it’s almost *impossible* to want to go through with this when I feel like everyone is expecting me to fail, that’s all.”

There’s a pause, a moment of shared consideration, before Sapnap speaks again.

“We’re not expecting you to fail, dude. It’s just— we want you to be as prepared as we can get you. That’s it, really.”

Dream keeps his gaze upon the carpet. He tugs at loose fibers with too-long fingers once more, half expecting them to break with the pressure he forces upon them.

“Dream,” George nudges him with a shoulder, gentle, “You’ve got this.”

Dream swallows, and raises his head.

He stares at the final remnants of white powder within it’s plastic bag.

“Yeah,” he murmurs, “I’ve got this.”

Chapter End Notes

i love u guys i really do all your comments are so sjsisiejnfjffj

three

Chapter Notes

hi hi! this chapter has a lot of anxiety, some anger, mentions of bug motifs and symptoms of stimulant withdrawal and such!!!

also possibly some very slight mentions of what could be seen as self harm caused by scratching.

please be aware, please be safe, and please enjoy <3

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

As the hours pass, along with the final sharp inhale, chased by blood and broken capillaries, Dream begins to tremble.

It starts in the tips of his fingers, barely noticeable at first, just the slightest twitch when he reaches out to take the offered beer from Sappnap's hand.

As more time wears on, Dream's brain begins to *struggle*.

The dopamine that is normally forced from it's nuclei by stimulants is now lacking, causing the trembling to progress from his fingers to his wrists, leaving him with shaking hands that he leaves bundled in his lap while he speaks, hidden.

When he gets up to go to the bathroom, he paces in the hallway after washing his hands, back and forth, up and down the wooden slat floor beneath his feet, *forwards and backwards, again and again*, walking straight lines to rid himself of this growing anxiety.

Once, when Dream was a child, he tossed a rock at a nest of hornets within the school yard.

The angry hum of his mind recalls that memory now.

A constant, obnoxious buzzing, and the far away pain from the memory of being stung, loud and burning all at once, too much, too much.

Something stings now, and he blinks.

When he looks down, his arm is red and raw from where blunt nails have scraped against skin in a

constant fashion, repetitive and harsh.

Oddly enough, he can't bring himself to stop.

He watches the way his skin goes white, then pink, then red with each mind-numbing scrape, until his thumbnail catches on scratched-up skin, and the faintest pin-pricks of blood begin to bloom, speckled haphazardly in a chaotic mess.

It causes him to freeze, the pain increasing from a dull sting to something more of a burn, and he stops, staring.

"You good?"

George garners his attention, and Dream blinks, stares at him, confused, glancing around the living room.

He wonders when Sapnap left the room to get more beer. It feels like hours, but he can see that the sun filtering in from the windows is still a familiar shade of orange, and the shadows haven't crept too far along the floor just yet.

Can't have been too long. Minutes maybe, perhaps only moments, but definitely not hours.

"Dream?"

Dream blinks again, snapping back to George, away from his racing thoughts and burning arm.

"Oh. Um. Nervous, I think."

Normally he'd be thankful for the distraction from his thoughts, but for some reason, annoyance settles in his tone, annoyance at being interrupted, at his paper-thin fixation being jarred.

He blinks again, and twitches uncomfortably at the way his clothing settles on his skin.

His trembling has formed into the hard vibrations of a shivering, his bones and muscles shifting like tectonic plates, shuddering like following quakes, and he watches the fabric of his t-shirt ripple

with each motion.

He buzzes like the wasps.

He blinks once more, harder than usual.

“You’re withdrawing.”

“Yeah, no *shit*,” he hisses.

George says nothing, but Dream catches the way his jaw clenches, upper molars biting down on bottom molars, biting down to hold back hurt.

He schools his face well, but not well enough.

“*Fuck*,” Dream sighs, “I’m so sorry. I didn’t mean— I didn’t mean to—“

“It’s fine—“

“It’s *not*,” Dream laughs, but it’s high and erratic and he grabs at his hair nervously, “It’s *really* not. I get mad at fucking *everyone*, but I don’t get mad at *you*, I *never* get mad at *you*.”

“I mean, you were bound to get mad at me *eventually*,” George offers, “especially now. We *knew* this would happen, Dream.”

“I know but— but—*fuck*. Maybe this is a bad idea, maybe this—“ *his scalp is beginning to sting with the force applied from his aggressive tugging, sting like the wasps*, “—fuck, I don’t know, *fuck*.”

“Dream— *hey*,” George’s hands reach up to wrap around his wrists, cool and soothing around his own sweltering hot skin, “*breathe*, Dream, come on, sit down with me.”

George unknots Dream’s hands from his own hair, and he holds them between them as they sit, tracing shapes and patterns up and down his burning arms.

“What are you feeling?”

“I’m— I’m *terrified*,” Dream admits, his voice strangled, emotions spat into the air like a choking sprat, “I feel like I— I’m making a *mistake*, and I’m— I’m pushing you away already.”

“You’re not pushing me away, Dream,” George promises, hushed and gentle, “I’m still here. I’m *right* here, come on, breathe with me.”

“I *can’t*—“ *fear*.

“You *can*,” *reassurance*, “come on, like you taught me that one time. In for five seconds—“

Dream inhales.

“—hold for five seconds—“

Dream holds.

“—out for five seconds—“

Dream exhales.

“—hold for five seconds—“

Dream holds.

“—and repeat.”

Dream repeats.

They repeat this process together, George breathing with him, an attempt at preventing further panic from his anxious hyperventilating.

When Sapnap returns with the beer, he sits on the floor in front of the couch silently, sitting the drinks on the coffee table, and turning to rest his head on Dream’s knee in silent support.

Dream holds George’s hand in one firm grip, and his free hand cards gingerly through his best friend’s hair, trembling as he regulates his breathing.

The shaking doesn't stop, and Dream thinks his lungs might rattle right out of his chest with each vibrating breath, but eventually his breathing slows along with his racing heart.

"What are you feeling now?"

Dream blinks.

A lot of things. But mostly—

"I'm uh... I'm fucking *starving*, actually."

George snorts, failing to reign in his laughter, and Sapnap shakes against Dream's knee with his own chuckles, ringing a slight smile out of Dream's watery features.

"We can work with that," Sapnap grins, slapping a hand on Dream's knee before reaching for his phone, "what are we feeling?"

Dream wants *everything*.

Sapnap talks him down from everything to something more manageable.

"You gotta go *slow*, dude," he says as he enters his card details, "I know you're probably starving, but you haven't had an appetite in so long that if you rush this, your stomach will be *so* mad."

Dream cocks his head at the certainty and concern in his friend's words, intrigued as he tugs on a loose thread in his shirt hem.

"How do you know that?"

"A lot of googling, mostly," he shrugs, "got concerned a while back when you weren't eating so much."

"... you really do a lot for me."

His friend shrugs again, opening his mouth to say something, Dream cutting him off with a quip.

“Clearly, we have *got* to get you laid.”

Sapnap’s jaw freezes open, a flush writhing across his cheeks before he shakes his head and laughs.

“Oh, *fuck off*—“

“No, we do— *we do!* George, back me up—“

“I mean,” George grins, holding out his index finger in thought, “there is that *one* guy—“

Dream’s eyebrows shoot up, and Sapnap reddens further.

“No— *no*— do *not*—“

“Who is this *guy*?”

“I just bought you guys food— come on— George, you *asshole!*”

Dream pokes at Sapnap, urging grumbled answers out of him and learning a lot about a boy with purple nail polish, right up until the food arrives.

He pretends not to notice when Sapnap steals George’s fries in retaliation for ratting him out, and steals a couple himself in solidarity with his friend.

But as more time passes, even with a meal in his stomach, Dream begins to feel worse, an uncomfortable prickling sense of warmth underneath the fabric of his clothes, and his irritability only grows, causing him to distance himself from the conversation in a bitter silence.

George catches his gaze, and smiles, gentle and understanding.

Dream hates that it just makes him feel worse.

“Come on,” George tugs him from the couch, “you should try to sleep.”

And he tries.

God he tries.

He tosses and turns, his skin awash with a thin layer of sweat as his muscles complain with a pinch and a burn, and he's so tired, *he's so, so tired.*

George smooths cool hands over his worried features, hushing him when Dream apologises a third time for accidentally waking him.

Eventually, in the aching darkness, Dream awkwardly tumbles into a restless sleep, accompanied by the sound of George's gentle snoring, and the wasps buzzing in his nervous system.

Chapter End Notes

i'm really nervous about this fic honestly skskskdkd using personal experiences can be so inspirational but it's also very vulnerable to sort of just word vomit them on the internet you see HAHAHAHA

i really hope you guys like it though!!!!

four

Chapter Notes

symptoms get hectic in this one - bug motifs, a lot of anger, a lot of depression, and some mentions of suicidal thoughts

be safe x

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Dream isn't quite sure what images emerge when he finally falls asleep.

The nightmare is abstract and strange, and he can't quite remember the things he saw, *only recalls smell of something rotten, something sickly sweet with the smell of decay and sour earth, only recalls the twisted sense of confusion paired with awful, awful fear, his mind turned inside-out and upside-down in one sudden, jarring motion as his ears buzz with the beating of tiny insect wings.*

He awakens in a sweat, crying, hollering for his mother like a child as he shakes and writhes, trying to unknot himself from the thin sheet he's twisted his legs into.

His flailing wakes George when he catches his arm in an accidental swipe, jolting him awake and upwards, and George hushes him, calling his name and bringing him back down from the rush of bitter adrenaline and sour fear.

Dream cries into his boyfriend's chest.

He messes them both with sweat and tears, and he's aware of the faint stench of his own body odour, but he's too afraid to be embarrassed by the disgusting nature of being human.

He sweats, and he shivers, and he curses and he swears.

The nightmare sheds from his skin, but the fever lingers.

"You alright?"

No.

He's not.

“Yeah,” Dream whispers back, “yeah, *fuck*, I’m sorry. That was just— that was a bad one.”

“Mm, I could tell. Do you want me to stay up with you?”

He does.

“No— no,” he sniffs, aware of the mucus rattling in his nose and the dryness around the edges of his right nostril, “it’s fine. We should— we should try to sleep again.”

Later on, Dream will tell George he slept fine.

Later on, Dream will lie, because he was too afraid to close his eyes again, lest his vision be filled with abstract shapes and colours too confusing to comprehend, lest his senses be assaulted with the smell of something dead once more.

The days of the first week pass in a mess.

Dream spends the majority coiled in on himself like a snake, agitated and irritated, snapping at the smallest perception of provocation, barking at jokes that fall flat, hissing at words that should be encouraging, but only make him feel coddled, snapping at the people he loves most.

George recoils when Dream bites his words at him.

Dream doesn’t remember what he said, half the time he remembers only *anger and craving and itching*, but later he’ll cry, broken by his own actions, broken at the man the withdrawals have forced him to become.

He feels like a frightened animal, cornered and confused, too afraid to accept help, responding only with aggression.

His friends will soothe him, and promise that they understand.

Something in Dream fails to believe them.

In the beginning of the second week, George asks Dream what he's doing.

It's the middle of the night, the only light from that of the torch on Dream's phone, and he freezes in his tracks, because *god, he thought George was asleep.*

He sits, kneeling on his bedroom floor, surrounded by clothes ripped from their hangers and pants hastily unfolded, by drawers that have been tugged open in a rush, their contents spilled onto the floor in a display of desperation.

His hand is frozen within one of his jacket pockets, clenched around nothing, coming up empty.

Even in the dim lighting, it's painfully obvious what he was doing.

"Nothing," he retorts, cold and tired as he clambers back into bed, "I'm fine."

He is not.

It continues to show when his already too-short attention span vanishes.

The distractions that once helped with his ever swinging moods that now metronome back and forth from depression to rage, the distractions that once helped with the ever present cravings, begin to fail.

Dream gives up on his grades. George takes the risk of doing his assignments for him— uncaring about the threat of expulsion if they were to be caught.

And even though the cravings may not be as intense as they were in the beginning, without any feasible way to distract himself, they remain at the forefront of Dream's mind, ever present and obnoxious.

At the end of the fourth week, after he excuses himself to "go piss", Dream stands in the bathroom, pushing at the window above the toilet with a hard grunt.

If he can just get the fuck out of this house— if he can just get the fuck out of here— he's got enough money on his card to score. It's fine, he can walk barefoot, he doesn't give a shit, he just needs his head to be quiet for a second, he just needs everything to shut the fuck up.

He just needs the wasps to stop buzzing.

But no matter his efforts, the window doesn't budge.

It's locked.

Later on, he will be glad that George wasn't in the house to see this.

Because Dream snaps.

"Sapnap!" He shouts, his voice a jagged snarl as he slams his hand on the frosted glass of the window, "Sapnap, what the *fuck!*"

He hears the footsteps that indicate his friend's entry, and he turns on him, a whirlwind of self-destruction and anger.

"What is *this*, huh? What— you think you can just fucking *keep me here?*"

Sapnap doesn't flinch.

"I knew this would happen," he shrugs lamely, "I know you too well."

"You don't fucking know *shit!*" Dream bangs his hand on the window once more, and the glass

reverberates his open palm, “You haven’t got a fucking *clue!*”

“Are you done yet?”

The simple snide jab, the slight sting of the cold remark, the implications that Dream is nothing but a child, throwing a tantrum, they all swell in Dream’s mind, a rising crescendo.

Dream takes a swing at his best friend.

He misses.

Dream’s muscles ache too much to even remotely be fast enough to take Sapnap by surprise, giving him the time to dodge.

He steps back, and when Dream stumbles from the missed shot, he shoves him *hard*.

From a crescendo, to a fall, Dream collapses in a heap on the ground.

“Get a *fucking* hold of yourself, Dream,” Sapnap hisses, unable to restrain his own two weeks worth of venom, “I *know* you’re struggling right now, but *fuck—!* You *don’t* get to take it out on George, and you sure as *fuck* don’t get to take it out on *me*. I don’t have to fucking help you out of your own mess, but *I do*, because you’re my fucking *brother*, and *I love you*.”

He steps back, and he storms out, calling over his shoulder as he goes.

“This is for your own good, man.”

When the anger finally dissipates, for the first time in a long time, as Dream weeps on the bathroom tiles, he will think about killing himself.

He doesn’t tell anybody about his thoughts. They come and they go, and even though the cravings gradually seem to be easing, the thoughts won’t go away.

As the anger begins to subside, it’s place is filled by something cold, and miserable.

Dream’s anxiety reaches it’s peak, paired with familiar notes of self-hatred and distress, only

furthered by his continuous inability to *just fucking focus for five seconds, god.*

He sits on the floor in their living room, still half-dazed from waking up from another nightmare-fueled sleep, and he tugs on the carpet, further balding the patch that he had picked to ruin weeks ago.

The hornets' nest from his childhood buzzes in his mind like television static.

He can't do this.

“Where’s George?” He croaks out to Sapnap.

He sees Sapnap look up from the corner of his eye, pausing from reading something on his phone, confused.

Dream hasn't spoken to him since he swung at him in the days prior.

“He, uh—“ Sapnap clears his throat, locking his phone, “He ducked out to get some groceries and shit. Since you’re eating more, you know.”

There’s a pause.

The wasps buzz louder.

“Why? What’s up?”

The nest falls. It shatters when it hits the ground. The wasps escape, and flood the air, and when Dream tries to breathe in, he gasps, and he chokes on nothing but the wasps.

“I can’t fucking *do this*—“ he sobs, pulling his fingers from the carpet, rubbing his hands over tired, weeping eyes, “I can’t *do this*, Sap, I *can’t*— I need the fucking *drugs*, man, I just—“

He inhales another sharp sob.

“—I fucking— I *hate* myself— and I— I just keep making everyone else feel like— *like shit*— and I want it to *stop*— I want it to fucking *end* so bad—“

Despite their distance over the past days, despite the awkward tension and bitter cold, Sapnap is at his side, pulling Dream into a hug as he chokes out one more time.

“—*I can't fucking do this man.*”

“You *can*,” Sapnap promises, squeezing him tight, “You fucking *can*, dude, you’re doing *so good*, man— And I’m *so* fucking sorry I yelled at you the other day—“

“No— no it was *my* fault—“

“Well, *yeah*, but still—“

Dream chokes out a watery laugh at that one, before dissolving once more into tears, his friend holding him through this crash.

“—I’m still sorry,” Sapnap finishes, “I could have handled that better. But dude, please— don’t think you can’t do this, because you fucking *can*.”

They cling to each other on the raggedy carpet.

The wasps don't sound so close now.

“You can do this, Dream.”

He can do this.

He can.

recovery is a bitch
be good to yourself
i love u x

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Next to a familiar spot on the tattered carpet, a spot that is beginning to turn threadbare and bald, George pops two ibuprofen into Dream's waiting hand, observing the lingering tremble in his fingertips secretively, just a cautious flicker of the eyes.

George offers Dream his can of cola to wash the pills down, and Dream thanks him softly from around the lip of the can as he tilts it toward himself, the muscles in his wrists still aching with the slightest movements.

The sugary liquid fizzes upon his tongue, and Dream curls it in response, tracing over his teeth absentmindedly as he hands the can back.

He wonders if all those years of stimulants did his teeth any damage, night after night of grinding his teeth and clenching his jaw, more often than not combined with the acidity of alcohol or caffeine.

He flexes his jaw experimentally, sighs when it clicks, and slumps against his boyfriend with a huff, ignoring the pull in the slope of his neck when he does so, favouring the comfort of being pressed against another person, against somebody he loves, over sitting straight to avoid the pain.

"I should go to the dentist."

"Where the *hell* did that thought come from?" George laughs, leaning back against him, "I seriously cannot follow your train of thought at all sometimes."

"The cola."

"The—? Sure, okay."

George shakes his head fondly, turning his head slightly to press a gentle kiss to the side of Dream's head.

Dream flushes at the tenderness of it, and wonders if he'll ever get used to it.

He hopes not.

"Do you feel better?" George queries suddenly, a slight hint of nerves to his voice.

One day in the near future, when Dream is better, he vows to spoil George rotten. To do everything he can to make up for his short fuse and bitter words through his healing process, to take away the underlying uncertainty that he has nestled inside of George's words, leaving him so cautious when he was once so brave.

Until then, the guilt will eat away at him, *a slow chewing similar to that of a wasp larvae, gnawing away at the softness of fruit.*

He hopes he can remedy his guilt before the bug pupates underneath his heart and lungs, before it beats it's way free with buzzing wings, and finds the old nest up in his brain, hidden somewhere behind frazzled neurona and grey matter, tucked inside his midbrain.

He blinks his way out of his thoughts, away from images of grubs and relapse, brings himself back into reality.

"Jeez, how strong was that ibuprofen you gave me?" Dream quips with a sly grin, "I *just* took them, no effect yet."

"Obviously," George huffs, and Dream relaxes at his familiar sarcasm, "I meant like— like in general, I guess. I noticed you're not shaking as much today."

"Really?"

Dream holds out an open hand, his palm toward the ground, observing only the most minute of shivers in his hand, like ripples in water left behind from an insect's delicate landing.

"Huh," he lowers his palm to his lap, tugging at a rip in his jeans, eyes fixed upon his fingers, "I hadn't noticed honestly. I guess— like my body still fucking *aches*. I still have anxiety, but my mood is definitely a little better. And my focus, too, I think. What week are we in now?"

"Eight."

"No shit," he clicks his tongue, thinking, "god, I *really* didn't think I'd make it this far. Especially not after—"

He hesitates.

They don't really talk about his breakdown. It feels so raw and surreal, the memory of sobbing into his best friend's arms, George coming home with a bag of groceries and leaving them discarded in the doorway so he could layer himself on top of Dream like a security blanket, holding him tight along with Sapnap, holding him together as best they could while he screamed at the world for chewing him up and spitting him back out.

The thoughts still linger sometimes, but Dream avoids talking about them, afraid of burdening his

friends.

“You don’t have to feel bad about being miserable, you know. That’s kind of stupid, actually.”

Dream laughs at that.

“It *is* stupid, isn’t it? I don’t know— guess I just couldn’t cope with it all. I’m glad I have Sapnap,” he turns slightly, taking in the boy next to him, “and you, obviously.”

“Obviously,” George sniffs, but Dream catches the way his lips twitch with the ghost of a smile, “who else would have done all your assignments for you?”

Yet another thing he will forever be in debt to George for, sleepless nights spent with a brain that didn’t work, trying to force it into submission until one night he finally kicked and screamed and gave in, reluctantly handing his laptop to George with the demand to not put too much effort in.

But for now—

“Hey,” Dream nudges him shyly, his voice soft with fatigue, “I love you, you know.”

The ghost of a smile becomes real, George unable to real it in quick enough to maintain a stoic facade, the apples of his cheeks pinking as his mouth turns upward.

“Obviously,” his boyfriend says again.

In the tenth week, Dream falls asleep.

It’s an accident really.

One moment he’s bunched up next to George and Sapnap on the couch, a football game that nobody’s really paying attention to on the television, and the next his head is beginning to sag.

He wakes up to the sound of a bird somewhere outside, and he slowly props himself up on his elbows, blinking away tired confusion.

Somebody has tucked him in, wedged a pillow underneath his head and gently laid a blanket over his sleeping form. His feet dangle off the edge of the couch, his limbs too long for the shape of the furniture.

He is warm, but not uncomfortably so.

There is no fever.

There are no abstract shapes, no buzzing hornets, no smell of rotting fruits.

There is no nightmare.

“Hey,” a voice calls to him from the doorway, causing Dream to angle his neck, squinting in the low light of the morning.

George stands, a bowl of cereal in his hands and a t-shirt two sizes too big layered over his slim form. His sweats pool at his ankles, and Dream smiles at him softly.

“Hey.”

“We tried to wake you, but you were like—*proper* dead,” George shrugs, “and if you weren’t snoring so loud we *probably* would have been concerned. How are you feeling?”

“I do *not* snore,” Dream retorts, reaching up to ruffle his hair out of its flattened state, adjusting his position as George crosses the room to sit next to him, “but I feel—“

He chews on the word a moment before it settles in his mouth.

“—okay.”

“Like, “*okay-okay*” or “*I’m-keeping-it-bottled-up-okay*”?”

Dream snorts at that.

“Like a seven out of ten.”

“Oh, new record,” George smirks through a mouthful of cereal, “gold star.”

“I still feel like shit,” Dream chuckles, rubbing at the back of his neck where an ache is setting in, “so don’t get too excited.”

“How’re the cravings?”

“I mean,” Dream tilts his head one way and then another in a sort of balancing motion, “I wouldn’t exactly— like, say *no* to a bag. But I’m not about to try and bust out of the bathroom window again.”

“Your ass wouldn’t have fit anyway!”

Sapnap calls from somewhere in the kitchen, and Dream’s bark of laughter tears from his chest.

And with the following weeks, Dream will slide gracelessly into a sort of clunky sense of normality, disjointed and out of place, but better.

When he returns to his freelance coding and finishes his first job back, he will show George for a second opinion.

“You did it,” his boyfriend will say, holding his face between his hands and kissing him ever so softly, and Dream will know he doesn’t just mean the job.

When Dream holds his boyfriend’s hand, his grasp no longer shakes.

“Yeah,” he’ll smile as he kisses his boyfriend knuckles, “yeah, I fucking did.”

For now, the wasps are silent.

Chapter End Notes

although maybe in the very distant future (seriously like not soon) i may pick this up again for one very very last hurrah, for now i can comfortably say, that this is the end of my sweet cokehead!au!

i will be ending it here and focusing upon my mental health for a while, and that means minimising the amount of angst i crank out!
this fic has been very dear to me, and it was a wonderful opportunity for me to push out some very dark and personal experiences in the world. as somebody who suffers from substance misuse, it is very rare to find fiction that doesn't romanticise or demonise use, and so it was so wonderful to be able to write this fic and have other people experience it along the way.

from the bottom of my heart, thank you guys so much for the support, the art, the comments, and all the love!! i'll be responding to comments again soon.

you've been beautiful.
stay safe.
i'll see you guys next year x

End Notes

oh hey, fancy seeing you guys here wink wink

title is taken from the lyrics to:
Dance Gavin Dance - Chuck Bassy

how we feeling babies? i've missed you. let's possibly try and wrap this series up, shall we?

thank you to steph and to ori for always motivating and believing in me, even when i fell off the earth for a little while x

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!